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ROBERT HARDY'S SEVEN DAYS.

A DREAM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

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CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Hardy looked at his son sternly, standing at the little distance off he had recoiled after that first recognition of the boy. It would be difficult to describe his emotions. He had never been an affectionate father to his boys. He had generally given them money when they asked for it and had not questioned them about its use.

He was not familiar with his older son's habits and only within the last few days had he known that he was what the age popularly designates as "fast." He had never made a companion of his son. He had not grown up with him, so that now as he faced him under the strange circumstances that had brought them together he was actually at a loss to know what to do or say.

The thought that his son was guilty of a crime which might put him behind prison bars did not yet occur to his mind. He was only conscious of a great longing to get back home and there have a thorough talk with his boy in the hope of winning him to better things. But he must say something to George.

The police officer stared in wonder after the first startled cry of "Father!" on the part of the young man, but he did not loosen his hold on him. He took an extra twist in the coat collar of his captive and looked sharply at Mr. Hardy as much as to say, "He may be your son, but he's my victim, and I mean to keep a good clutch on him."

George was the first to speak:

"Father, you know I wouldn't do such a thing really. We were only out for a little fun. We didn't know you, of course. We didn't mean any real harm. We were only fooling."

"It was dangerous fooling," replied his father.

He still stood apart from the boy and spoke quietly, but his face was pale, and his heart was wrung with torture for his firstborn.

Ah, how careless of him he had been! How little companionship the two had had! How very little help the boy had received from the man!

Now, believing that only four more days lay before him to use to the glory

"Stop!" cried Robert Hardy. "This is my son!"

of God, Robert Hardy felt the sting of that bitterest of all bitter feelings, useless regret, the regret that does not carry with it any hope of redeeming a selfish past.

After his father had spoken George sullenly remained silent. Mr. Hardy bowed his head and seemed thinking. The officer, who had been waiting for another move on the part of the older man, said:

"Well, we must be moving on. It's warmer in the lockup than out here. So come along, young fellow, and do your talking tomorrow morning with the rest of the drunks and disorderlies."

"Stop!" cried Robert Hardy. "This is my son! Do you understand? What are you going to do?"

"Well, governor, that's a pretty question at this time of day. Do! I'm going to jug him for assault with intent to commit highway robbery. It's an affair for the 'pen,' I can tell you."

"But you heard him say it was all a joke."

"A pretty joke to try to hold a man up on the highway and demand his money! Oh, no! That's carrying a joke too far. I'm bound to obey orders. We've been after this gang of young chaps for a month now."

"But, officer, you don't understand! This is my son!"

"Well, what of that? Don't we jug sons every day for some deviltry or other? Do you suppose you are the only father whose son is going to the devil?"

"O God, no!" cried Mr. Hardy, with sudden passion. "But this is my older boy. It would kill his mother to have him arrested and put in jail for trying to rob his own father. Yet he was once innocent— What am I saying? He might be now if I had done my duty."

Mr. Hardy confronted the officer with a certain sorrowful dignity which even that hardened defender of the law understood.

"Officer, let the boy go. I will answer for it if any blame falls on you for it. He was not at fault in this matter. He was not the one who assaulted me. He did not touch me. You could not get a particle of testimony against him. And, besides that, it is necessary that he return with me. This is a case for the law of God. This belongs to a higher court."

The officer hesitated; Mr. Hardy stepped nearer his son.

"George," he said as if forgetting for a moment that the officer was present, "did you know that Clara and Bess and Will were in the accident last night?"

George turned pale and tremblingly replied: "No, father. Were they hurt? Was Bess"—

The boy seemed moved as his father had not yet seen him.

"No; they were not—that is, Bess was not hurt at all. But Will was severely bruised, and Clara still lies in a state of stupor or unconsciousness, and we do not know what the end will be. I was on my way just now to get some needed articles from the doctor's house. You must come back with me. The law has no hold on you."

"Maybe the law hasn't any hold on him, but Michael Finnerty has. I don't just like the idea, mister man, of letting the boy go yet," replied the stubborn and unusually dutiful officer.

Mr. Hardy began to appeal to the man's love of his own children. It did not seem to move him in the least until he mentioned the fact that it was cruelty to keep the suffering girl at home waiting for her father's return.

Finnerty finally loosened his hold on George and said slowly and painfully:

"And if I lose me job I'll be knowing who was to blame for it. I always told Michael Finnerty that he was too soft hearted to go on the force!"

"You won't suffer, officer. Many thanks! Come, George."

A l father and son moved off together, while the defender of the law stood irresolute, watching them disappear through the storm and muttering to himself: "I'm a soft hearted fool. I ought to 'a' been born a female hospital nurse, I had."

During that walk home, after Mr. Hardy had gone around by the doctor's with George, not a word was exchanged. The storm was increasing. The two walked along in silence, but when George walked into the hall at home he turned and saw a look on his father's face that smote him to the heart, for he was not yet a hardened soul.

Mr. Hardy had lived years in that experience. No one could tell how his heart had been tortured by what he had endured that night, but the mark of it was stamped physically on his face, and he knew that he would bear it to his grave.

Mrs. Hardy came running down stairs as the two came in, and as George turned and faced her she held out her arms, crying:

"My boy! My boy! We have been so anxious about you!"

What, not one word of reproach, of rebuke, of question as to what he had been doing all this time that the family had been suffering! No; not one word.

Ah, mother love! It is the most wonderful thing on earth, next to the love of God for the sinner. It is even that, for it is the love of God expressing itself through the mother, who is the temple of the loving God.

George dashed away a tear and then, going up to his mother, laid his cheek against hers, and she folded her arms about him and cried a little and asked no questions, and after a moment's silence he stammered out a few words of sorrow at having caused her pain, and she joyfully accepted his broken explanation of how he had not known of the accident to Clara and the others.

It was true he had gone out the evening before, fully intending to go down to the scene of the accident; but, coming across some of his old companions, he had gone off with them and spent the night in a disgraceful carouse and throughout the day had been under the influence of liquor more or less, dimly conscious that a great disaster had happened down the road, but not sober enough to realize its details or its possible connection with those of his own home.

The sudden meeting with his father had startled him out of the drowsy intoxication he had fallen into as the day progressed. Now, as he felt his mother's arms around him and realized a little what the family had been called upon to endure, he felt the shame and disgrace of his own conduct.

Mr. Hardy went up stairs and consulted with the doctor, who wondered at his protracted absence. There was no change in Clara yet. She lay in a condition which could not be called a trance nor a sleep. She did not seem to be in any great pain, but she was unconscious of all outside conditions.

After a little talk with his mother George came up and inquired after Bess and Will. They were both sleeping, and after the doctor had gone out the father and mother and son sat down together in the room where Clara lay.

Mr. Hardy did not say a word to George about the incident of the evening. The shame of it was too great yet. When men of Mr. Hardy's self contained, repressed, proud nature are pained, it is with an intense inward fire of passion that cannot bear to break out into words.

George had sense enough to offer to relieve his parents of the burden of watching during the night, and during the exchange of watchers along toward morning, as Mrs. Hardy slipped into the room to relieve the boy, she found him kneeling down at a couch with his face buried in the cushions. She raised her face in thanksgiving to God and went softly out.

The morning dawned gray with snow which still whirled in wreaths about the sorrowing homes of Barton, but Robert Hardy thought of the merciful covering it would make for the ghastly piles of ruin down under the bridge and along the banks of the river.

He said to himself: "This is my fourth day. How can I best spend it? What shall I do?" He kneeled and prayed and rose somewhat refreshed.

The forenoon went rapidly by, and before he knew it noon was near. The time had passed in watching Clara, visiting with Bess and Will and doing some necessary work for the company in his little office down stairs. He did not feel like saying anything to George yet.

James Caxton had been in, and the first thing he had mentioned had been his own act in the meeting the night

Mrs. Hardy found him kneeling down at a couch.

before. Mr. Hardy thanked God for it, and a prayer went out of his heart for his own son, that the Spirit might touch him in his sin and bring him into the light of Christ.

A little after noon the storm cleared up, and Robert prepared to go down to the shops. Clara had not yet come out of her stupor. The doctor had called and done what he could. There was nothing in particular that Mr. Hardy could do in the case, so he went out about 1 o'clock and entered his office at the shop, hoping as he went in that he would have no trouble with the men.

Mr. Burns reported everything quiet, and the manager, with a sigh of relief, proceeded with the routine duties of the business. Nothing of any special interest occurred through the afternoon. The storm had ceased entirely, and the sun had come out clear and warm. People were clearing off the walks, and the ringing of sleigh bells was distinct in the office, even over the incessant hum of the big engine.

Toward 3 o'clock one of Mr. Hardy's old friends, an officer of the road, came in and said there was a general movement on foot through Barton to hold a monster mass meeting in the town hall for the benefit of the sufferers, both in the railroad accident and in the explosion of the Sunday before in the shops. It was true the company would settle for damages, but in many cases through Barton the adjustment of claims would not be made until much suffering and hardship had been endured.

There was a common feeling on the part of the townspeople that a meeting for public conference would result in much good, and there was also, as has been the case in other large horrors, a craving to relieve the strain of feeling by public gathering and consultation.

"Can you come out to the meeting, Hardy?" asked his friend.

Mr. Hardy thought a minute and replied, "Yes; I think I can." Already an idea had taken shape in his mind which he could not help feeling was inspired by God.

"Might be a good thing if you could come prepared to make some remarks. I find there is a disposition on the part of the public to charge the road with carelessness and mismanagement."

"I'll say a word or two," replied Mr. Hardy, and after a brief talk on business matters his friend went out.

Robert immediately sat down to his desk, and for an hour, interrupted only by an occasional item of business brought to him by his secretary, he jotted down copious notes. The thought which had come to him when his friend suggested the meeting was this: He would go and utter a message that burned within him, a message which the events of the past few days made imperative should be uttered. He went home absorbed in the great idea. He had once in his younger days been famous for his skill in debate. He had no fear of his power to deliver a message of life at the present crisis in his own. He at once spoke of the meeting to his wife.

"Mary, what do you say? I know every minute is precious. I owe to you and these dear ones at home a very sacred duty, but no less, it seems to me, is my duty to the society where I have lived all these years, doing literally nothing for its uplift toward God, who gave us all life and power. I feel as if he would put a message into my mouth that would prove a blessing to this community. It seems to me this special opportunity is providential."

"Robert," replied his wife, smiling at him through happy tears, "it is the will of God. Do your duty as he makes it clear to you."

It had been an agitating week to the wife. She anticipated its close with a feeling akin to terror. What would the end be? She was compelled to say to herself that her husband was not insane, but the thought that he was really to be called out of the world in some mysterious manner at the end of the rapidly approaching Sunday had several times come over her with a power that threatened her own reason.

Nevertheless the week so far, in spite of its terror and agitation, had a sweet joy for her. Her husband had come back to her, the lover as he once had been, only with the added tenderness of all the years of their companionship. She thanked the Father for it, and when the hour came for Robert to go down to the meeting she blessed him and prayed heaven to make his words to the people like the words of God.

"Father, what do you want me to do? Shall I stay here?" asked George, who had not stirred out of the house all day. He had watched by Clara faithfully. She was still in that mysterious condition of unconsciousness which made her case so puzzling to the doctor.

Mr. Hardy hesitated a moment, then said: "No, George. I would like to have you go with me. Alice can do all that is necessary. But let us all pray together now before we go out. The Lord is leading us mysteriously, but we shall some time know the reason why."

So in the room where Clara lay they all kneeled down except Will, who lay upon a lounge near his unconscious sister. Mr. Hardy as he clasped his wife's hand in his own poured out his soul in this petition:

"Dear Lord, we know thou dost love us, even though we cannot always know why thou dost allow suffering and trouble, and we would thank thee for the things that cannot be destroyed, for the loves that cannot suffer death, for the wonderful promises of the life to come. Only we have been so careless of the things that belong to thy kingdom. We have been so selfish and forgetful of the great needs and sufferings and sins of earth. Pardon us, gracious Redeemer. Pardon me, for I am the chief offender. Yea, Lord, even as the robber on the cross was welcomed into paradise, welcome thou me. But we pray for our dear ones. May they recover. Make this beloved one who now lies unknowing among us to come back into the universe of sense and sound, to know us and smile upon us again.

"We say, 'Thy will be done.' Grand wisdom, for thou knowest best. Only our hearts will cry out for help, and thou knowest our hearts better than any one else. Bless me this night as I stand before the people. This is no selfish prayer, dear Lord. I desire only thy glory; I pray only for thy kingdom. But thou hast appointed my days to live. Thou hast sent me the message, and I cannot help feeling the solemn burden and joy of it.

"I will say to the people that thou art most important of all in this habitation of the flesh. And now bless us all. Give us new hearts. Make us to feel the true meaning of existence here. Reveal to us thy splendor. Forgive all the past and make impossible in the children the mistakes of the parent. Deliver us from evil, and thine shall be the kingdom forever. Amen."

When Mr. Hardy and George reached the town hall, they found a large crowd gathering. They had some difficulty in gaining entrance. Mr. Hardy at once passed up to the platform, where the chairman of the meeting greeted him and said he would expect him to make some remarks during the evening.

Robert sat down at one end of the platform and watched the hall fill with people, nearly all well known to him. There was an unusually large crowd of boys and young men, besides a large gathering of his own men from the shops, together with a great number of citizens and business men, a representative audience for the place, brought together under the influence of the disaster and feeling somewhat the breaking down of artificial social distinctions in the presence of the grim leveler Death, who had come so near to them the last few days.

There were the usual opening exercises common to such public gatherings. Several well known business men and two or three of the ministers, including Mr. Jones, made appropriate addresses. The attention of the great audience was not labored for, the occasion itself being enough to throw over the people the spell of subdued quiet.

When the chairman announced that "Mr. Robert Hardy, our well known railroad manager, will now address us," there was a movement of curiosity and some surprise, and many a man leaned forward and wondered in his heart what the wealthy railroad man would have to say on such an occasion. He had never appeared as a speaker in public, and he passed generally in Barton for the cold, selfish, haughty man he had always been.

TO BE CONTINUED.

GOD BLESS THE WOMEN!—A fashion book says that belts, gloves and neckties of rattlesnake skin is now fashionable. We felt convinced that the rattlesnake would have to come to it sooner or later. It is about the only varmint left that the women didn't wear. Think of a woman being arrayed in a silkworm dress, ostrich feather hat, sealskin sacque, goatskin shoes, whalebone stays, kidskin gloves, tortoise shell comb, fish scale trimmings, stuffed canary bird ornaments, clam shell buttons, Spitz dog muff, mink tail collarette, alligator hide purse, and a rattlesnake belt and necktie. Solomon in all his glory was not such a menagerie as one of these, and yet we love them no matter what they wear. God bless the women!

PROGRESS OF A CENTURY.

Some of the Marvels We Have Wrought in a Hundred Years.

By Permission of the Ladies' Home Journal.

There were but 5,300,000 people in America when this century opened. France had five times as many people; Germany, and even Austria, had four times America's population; Italy had three times as many, and so had Great Britain. Even Spain had double our number of people, and little Portugal was almost our rival in numbers.

We have more people now than any European nation except Russia, which alone leads us. We have as many people as live in all Great Britain and France combined. We have one-half more people than Germany. We have, practically, 75,000,000 people in the United States, and 10,000,000 more in our new possessions.

There were only five large cities in America in 1800. Philadelphia, with 66,000, was the largest, the seat of government, and the centre of wealth and culture. New York was next, with 60,000. Baltimore was third, with 26,500; Boston fourth, with 25,000; and Charleston, South Carolina, fifth with 19,000 people.

Chicago was unheard of in 1800. The century was three years old before the government even built a fort where Chicago now stands, and it was not until thirty years later that a city was thought of and incorporated.

There was no western city. The mighty, modern cities of St. Paul, Minneapolis, Omaha, Denver and Kansas City were unheard of. There was a small trading-post at St. Louis. That was all. The Pacific coast had two or three missions under Spanish control. All the rest of the west was given over to Indians and wild beasts.

In what are Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin now there lived 6,000 people in 1800, spread over that whole territory. The "Far West" was then Kentucky, Ohio and Western New York. Beyond the Alleghanies was practically a wilderness. Now 53,000,000 people live within the area that belonged to our nation in 1800.

The United States is larger now than all Europe in point of area. It has 3,600,000 square miles—one-fourteenth of the land surface of the entire globe. In 1800 we had just 825,000 square miles.

We are the richest nation on the globe. To-day our wealth is estimated at over $100,000,000,000; in 1800 it was $2,000,000,000. A man worth $300,000 was then considered abnormally rich; to day we have several hundred men who are worth $3,000,000 or more.

Uncle Sam spends each year, on his government, $550,000;000, not including the extra outlay occasioned by our late war and the new accession of territory. In 1800 he spent $12,500,000. In four years he now spends more than the entire wealth of the nation in 1800.

It is amazing how people lived in 1800, judged from modern standpoints. Half of them dwelt in log huts. Window glass was a luxury even in the coast towns. Some people used oil-paper; others had simple openings in the walls, which in winter were closed with plank split from logs. The iron stove was a positive luxury; the furnace was unheard of. Great fireplaces supplied heat, but could not keep these huts comfortable in winter.

There was no kerosene nor gas. Both were unheard of. The tallow dip was the standard light, and on the frontiers even tallow was scarce. There the torch of the forest was used. Lamps then were in the homes of the very rich, fed with whale or vegetable oils; but they were few, and the flame hardly brighter than the candles. For fifty years into the century these lights were used, for it was not until 1858 that petroleum was discovered, and, even in 1861, kerosene was very expensive, costing sixty cents a gallon.

There was no such thing as a match. The flint and steel of the old family musket was the means of kindling a fire; or a live coal was brought from a neighbor's, sometimes many miles distant. When the friction match came, in 1827, people were afraid of it and would not have it in the house. To-day we in America alone use over 125,000,000,000 matches each year.

The cooking-stove was unknown. The cooking was done in the fireplace in pots and kettles standing on long, slender legs well above the coals. The old brick oven was fired once a week to almost blazing heat and filled with appetizing dishes.

Table linen was made by the housewife, and it was beautiful. China and silverware were lacking. Pewter spoons and steel knives and forks were choice heirlooms and highly prized. Hand-made wooden trenchers, platters, bowls and noggins comprised most of the tableware in use a hundred years ago. On the frontiers meals were often eaten off chips freshly cut from the forest trees.

Garments were spun by hand, every member of the family doing a part. There were a few cotton-spinning mills in operation, but the spinning jenny, the carding machine and the loom with flying shuttle were almost unknown in America. The century was 13 years old before the first power loom was set up—at Waltham, Mass.

A woman could spin from dawn to dark from 40 to 60 knots of yarn. Now, with modern machinery, one operative can spin 150,000 knots in the same time.

Carpets were a luxury in 1800. There were a few woolen carpets in Philadelphia and New York; a few ingrains, and here and there an imported Turkish rug. But these were used for state occasions. The rag carpet was the glory of the housewife. A few Axminster carpets were made in Philadelphia; but the century was well begun before ingrains appeared. Up to 1850 there was not a power loom for carpet-making in America.

Not a cast-iron plow existed in 1800. The farmer used the sickle, the scythe and the flail. His plow was home-made—of wood covered with a thin sheet of iron. Seeds were scattered by hand; the hoe was the cultivator. Grain was gathered by hand, threshed on the floor during the winter, and crushed beneath a stone pestle into flour, or ground in the neighboring flour mill. The mower, the reaper and the self-binder were unheard of.

To go to New York from Philadelphia meant two days by the swiftest stage; today it is done in two hours. To go from New England to Oregon it took Doctor Atkins eight months, even in 1847. Today one can go from New York to San Francisco in one hundred and two hours.

There was not a mile of railroad in 1800. The first line built was the Baltimore and Ohio, in 1830. It was fourteen miles long. Three years later, when the South Carolina Railway line of 136 miles was finished, it was the longest railroad in the world. Today in the United States alone there are 185,000 miles of railroad, or more than a third of the mileage of the entire world. In 1833 there were but 16 passenger locomotives in the United States; today there are 10,000.

No steamboat existed in the world a hundred years ago. Sailing vessels crossed the Atlantic ocean and took from two to three months for the voyage. Bullet-proof packet-boats, propelled by sails, horses and poles, attended to most of the commerce between river towns. Passage from New Orleans to Louisville cost $125. It was not until 1807 that Robert Fulton built his "Clermont," and the first steam propelled boat in the world steamed up the Hudson river.

The street car was unknown in 1800. The century was a third over before the first horse car appeared—in New York city. The trolley car came only twelve years ago. Now we have 19,000 miles of trolley roads in America, running 60,000 cars.

The newspaper had hardly started. There were about one hundred and fifty publications of all kinds in the United States. About one-tenth of them were newspapers, and were issued daily. Not one of them sold more than a thousand copies a day. Today we have 22,000 different periodicals of all kinds.

There were 903 post-offices in 1800. Today we have 75,000—that is, in America alone. It took a letter sixteen days to go from Philadelphia to Lexington, Kentucky; twenty-two days to Nashville, Tennessee. The cheapest letter postage was eight cents, and to send a letter more than a hundred miles cost a shilling. Three million letters and papers were then sent in a year. At the present time the post-office handles about 30,000,000 pieces of mail in a single day.

The telegraph was unheard of. Not until 1844 did Morse send his first telegram. When the battle of Waterloo was fought, in 1815, unusual measures of haste were adopted to get the news to London, where it was received three days later. The guns of Dewey's fleet were hardly quiet before the result of the battle was known in New York. To-day we have 1,000,000 miles of telegraph wire in America, and 70,000,000 messages are sent over them each year. There are 150,000 miles of cable on ocean beds, but none of this was laid until the century was sixty-six years old.

This is how the people lived in 1800. Every community was isolated from every other community. New York was farther removed from Philadelphia than Africa is now. It was New Year's Day before Boston knew what had happened in New York on Christmas Day. There were practically no conveniences; people of those early days knew nothing whatever of comforts. And yet by the people of those days was laid the basis of the country which we enjoy to-day—a hundred years later.

An interesting thought: What will the people of a hundred years hence think of how we lived in 1900.

WORLD COMBAT PENDING.

Significance of Events Now Going on In China.

James Creelman in New York Journal.

It is no secret that the six great powers of Europe have been steadily preparing themselves for the breaking up of the Chinese empire. Japan and the United States have also made ready for the collapse of the Manchu dynasty.

The whole world will feel the shock of the colossal events which are impending in Asia, and the spray of missionary blood which has set fleets and troops in motion toward Tien-Tsin, is but the first signal of a struggle that will probably involve every important nation.

This assembling of war ships in the Gulf of Pe-chi-li is not an accident. It is a part of a plan matured long ago. It is the first step toward the partition of China and her four hundred million inhabitants among the great powers.

Every important statesman in Europe has predicted that the political roof of Asia would crash in this year or next year, and that the first outbreak against Christian missionaries would set the processes of dissolution in motion.

The thing that is about to happen will change the map of the world. It may overturn more than one kingdom.

During my stay in China last year I learned enough to know that civilized Europe had officially decreed the death of the empire. And when I reached Europe I found that the American ambassadors in the great capitals had been instructed by Secretary Hay to secure from the governments to which they were accredited definite pledges that, in the event of the breaking up of China, the "open door" policy would hold in all new territory acquired by them. It was well understood that this agreement between the powers of the world, secured through the efforts of the United States, was made necessary by unmistakable evidence that China was powerless to resist the all-engulfing movements of Russia.

The fall of Poland gave the czar a window looking out on Europe. Then began the Russian movement toward Constantinople. The Black Sea was to be the base of a great Russian fleet. This movement was checked by England, and the triple alliance, formed under the presidency of the German emperor, has ever since resisted the efforts of Pan-Slavism to force a military outlet to the Mediterranean.

Russia turned her face from impregnable Europe to the far east. Her engineers planned the Siberian railway, a steam highway six thousand miles long. This was to give Russia the outlet in the Pacific that had been denied to her in Europe.

Then came the China-Japanese war. Japan drove the Chinese army out of Corea, and an army corps, under Field Marshal Yamagata, occupied the hermit peninsular. Japan crossed the Yellow Sea and invaded Manchuria. Twenty-three thousand Japanese soldiers, under Field Marshal Oyama, conquered an empire of four hundred millions.

It is true that the Japanese did not go beyond Port Arthur, Wei-Hai-Wei and Tien-Chwang, but there is no doubt that Oyama's compact little invading force could have marched from one end of the Chinese empire to the other without meeting effective opposition. I accompanied the field marshal and saw everywhere complete and unmistakable evidence of the military impotency of China.

The treaty of Shimonoseki gave a province of Manchuria, including the powerfully fortified harbors of Port Arthur and Talien-Wan, to Japan. Russia, backed by France and Germany, forced Japan to waive these territorial rights on the Chinese mainland.

Then Russia moved swiftly. By supporting the Emperor of Corea against the rough domination of the Japanese, the czar's influence became supreme in Corea, which adjoins Manchuria, and will furnish a seaport termination for the Siberian railway—a naval base, free from ice in winter weather. Russia guaranteed, and partly furnished, the money for the heavy war indemnity exacted by Japan, and thus acquired a hold on China. Presently the world was astonished by the news that China had ceded, or leased for ninety-nine years—virtually a sale—Talien-Wan and Port Arthur, with its great dry dock for battleships.

The meaning of the Siberian railway dawned on the mind of Europe. Russian diplomacy was tireless, resistless. China yielded to Russia the right to build a railway from the main Siberian line down through Manchuria to Port Arthur. And then Russia poured thousands of her soldiers—under the thin pretence that they were railway police—into Manchuria.

Today Manchuria is in effect a Russian province. Inside of a year or 18 months the great Siberian railway, which runs across the top of Asia, with spurs touching Persia, Northern India and China, will be completed.

China is hopeless. Her Tsung-li-Yamen is filled with doddering old Mandarins intent upon blackmail and careless of the public interests. There is no national sentiment, practically no army or navy, and no scheme of defense, external or internal. It is the past passively resisting the present and future. The young emperor is either dead or a prisoner, and the ruthless empress wields whatever power she can.

All is confusion, corruption and decay in China. Strong European statesmen have attempted to save her by means of internal reforms; but they have had to give up the impossible task. The Chinese reformer, Kung Yu Wei—a really enlightened and broad minded statesman—for a few days got control of the Chinese throne, when the young emperor assumed power. He began to apply modern principles to Chinese problems in the hope of averting the doom of his country. Too late! The empress seized the throne. Kung Yu Wei fled for his life, and all his friends were butchered.

The peace treaty between China and Japan opened many Chinese ports. As foreigners pressed into the interior the Chinese grew more and more hostile. Missionary blood was shed. The German emperor seized Kiao Chau and Great Britain took Wei-Hai-Wei, close to the Russian bases at Port Arthur and Talien-Wan.

The direct route to Pekin and Tien-Tsin lies through the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li, past the Taku forts and up the Peho river. Russia holds one side of this gulf; Great Britain and Germany the other side. All are ready to strike.

Japan has never forgiven Russia for taking away from her the Manchurian territory, ceded by China. The Japanese government has almost bankrupted itself in the effort to build a navy strong enough to resist Russia.

Japan has her revenge in sight. The United States has interests in the Philippines and an eye for conquest or acquisition—whichever word may be more acceptable—in the threatened empire.

And so the forces of death, greed, international jealousy and sleepless ambition are gathering at the gateway of China. This may be only the preliminary movement. It may be succeeded by months of diplomatic wrangling and intrigue. But one thing is certain. The pressure on China will grow greater every day, the riots and disorders will increase, the desire for territory and trade will set the imagination of all nations on fire, and then, this year perhaps, the oldest empire in the world will tumble down and every great nation will have a Chinese colony. Either that, or Russia will seize Asia.